



**U.S. Department of Justice
U.S. Attorney's Office
Western District of Texas**

Johnny Sutton, U.S. Attorney

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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EL PASO COUPLE SENTENCED TO FEDERAL PRISON FOR ALIEN SMUGGLING

United States Attorney Johnny Sutton announced that 53-year-old Samuel Rojas-Hernandez (a.k.a. Jesse Rodriguez) and his wife, 53-year-old Ana Maria Rameriz of El Paso, Texas, were sentenced to 34 and 24 months respectively for alien smuggling and transportation of illegal aliens for profit.

In addition, United States District Judge David Briones ordered Rojas pay a \$2,000 fine and be deported after completing his prison term. Judge Briones also ordered Rameriz to perform 200 hours of community service after completing her prison term. Judge Briones also ruled that \$13,500—cash derived from the illegal enterprise seized by authorities at the time of the defendants arrest—be forfeited to the government.

“Once again this case demonstrates the resolve of the U.S. Attorney’s Office and our law enforcement partners to aggressively investigate and prosecute those who illegally traffic in human cargo,” stated **Johnny Sutton**, U.S. Attorney for the Western District of Texas.

The defendants entered guilty pleas December 1, 2003. Both admitted responsibility for smuggling and transporting approximately 100 illegal aliens from their residence and other safe houses in El Paso to Albuquerque, New Mexico. On October 8, 2003, agents with the Bureau of Immigration and Customs Enforcement arrested the defendants. Samuel Rojas was arrested in Vado, New Mexico, after authorities discovered four illegal aliens hidden inside the air dam of his tractor trailer rig. Ana Maria Rameriz was arrested during a subsequent search warrant conducted at the defendants’ residence. Authorities are still looking for the defendants’ four sons—23-year-old Oscar Balderas, 24-year-old Ernesto Balderas-Rameriz, 29-year-old Angel Balderas and 28-year-old Hector Balderas— charged in this case with conspiracy to smuggle aliens.

“Human traffickers not only are a significant risk to domestic security, but they also are an endangerment to the people they exploit,” stated **Giovanni Gaudioso**, Special Agent in Charge, United States Immigration and Customs Enforcement, El Paso. “In this case, these human traffickers showed their reckless disregard for human life by placing smuggled aliens at significant personal risk in the way they used to transport them.”

Assistant United States Attorney Brandy Gardes is prosecuting this case on behalf of the government.

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